

REMARKS:

In view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks please reconsider the current application.

Independent claim 1 has been amended to more clearly distinguish the present invention from the examiner's cited references considered alone and in combination. More particularly claim 1 now better defines the structure of the present invention comprising an envelope having a central portion to support the head of a patient thereon between two breathable surface portions wherein there is provided a channel formed in the hollow interior which is U-shaped about the central portion in communication between the breathable surface portions with the suction port centrally located therebetween. By ensuring the envelope is only open at the breathable surface portions along opposing sides of the face of the patient and at the suction port centrally therebetween which communications through a U-shaped channel, an unrestricted flow of gas can be equally drawn from the two sides of the face of the user in a safe manner which draws the gas downwardly and away from the mouth and nose of the patient. The configuration of now amended claim 1 is believed to be clearly distinguished from the examiner's primary reference to McCarver and the additional cited reference to Nepon et al. as neither disclose any related form of envelope with a central portion supporting the head of a user thereon and only two breathable surface portions along opposing sides of the face of the patient.

Although the examiner's other cited reference in the form of the cited German document does disclose a device with a central portion which appears to support the head of user thereon, the outer shell is not only open along opposing sides of the face of the patient so that some gas may be drawn upwardly across the face of the user to the apertures in the upper portion of the envelope which is not as effective at drawing gas away from the mouth and nose of the patient as in the present invention. Furthermore there is no clear disclosure of the U-shaped channel formed within the hollow interior to provide an unrestricted flow of air between the two breathable surface portions and the suction port, as the device disclosed in the German document may comprise a porous filler material or some other internal structure for supporting the head of the user which does not clearly define a U-shaped channel as in the present invention. Furthermore the suction port in the cited German document does not communicate centrally with the base portion of the channel within the hollow interior of the envelope so as to draw an even unrestricted flow from the two breathable surface portions in a balanced manner as defined in now amended claim 1.

Now amended independent claim 1 is distinguished from the prior art

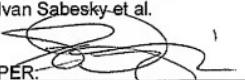
references considered alone and in combination by the following limitations:

- i) a channel formed in the hollow interior of the envelope which is generally U-shaped about the central portion supporting the head of the patient thereon;
- ii) the suction port being coupled to the envelope laterally centered between opposite side edges of the envelope in communication with the base portion of the U-shaped channel; and
- iii) the outer shell being formed of material impermeable to gas with openings therein only being located at the breathable surface portions along opposite sides of the face of the patient and the suction port.

The unique limitations of now amended claim 1 achieve the benefits unseen in the prior art of providing an unrestricted balanced airflow from opposing sides of the face of a patient using a simple device capable of supporting the head of the patient thereon in any one of numerous patient environments on a variety of different supporting surfaces unlike any available prior art devices.

Favorable reconsideration of this application is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted  
Ivan Sabesky et al.

  
PER.  
Ryan W. Dupuis  
Registration 47345

RWD/hk  
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Ryan W. Dupuis

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada  
Telephone (204) 944-0062 - FAX (204) 942-5723